DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 429 450 FL 025 800

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TITLE	A New Model of Teaching Pedagogy in CHISEL for the 21th Century.
PUB DATE	1998-11-00
NOTE	10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (32nd, Chicago, IL, November 20-22, 1998).
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Audiolingual Methods; *Chinese; Classroom Techniques; Cognitive Development; Communicative Competence (Languages); Comparative Analysis; Educational History; Foreign Countries; Grammar Translation Method; Interlanguage; *Language Processing; Language Skills; Personal Autonomy; Second Language Instruction; *Second Languages; Skill Development; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS	Chomsky (Noam); Cognitive Grammar; Direct Instruction Model; Situational Method; Structural Learning

ABSTRACT

This paper describes and compares six models for teaching second languages developed and adopted since 1840 (grammar-translation, direct, structural, situational, audiolingual, and communicative methods), and proposes a seventh, the cognitive-linguistic method, incorporating Noam Chomsky's theory of learning. The model takes both extralinguistic and intralinguistic factors into consideration, and is seen as: being more learner-oriented; promoting autonomous rather than dependent learning; teaching linguistic knowledge and behavior based on the student's cognitive system; balancing language skills better than previous methods; decreasing the discrepancy between second language knowledge and behavior; and incorporating better an understanding of interlanguage and how it functions. Contains 39 references, seven in Chinese. (MSE)

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ED 429 450

A New Model of Teaching Pedagogy in CHISEL for the 21th Century

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Foreign language teaching has had a long history around the world and in Taiwan. Early teaching method in the literature can be traced back to the Grammar-Translation Method in the late 18th century. The teaching methods discussed in more recent years are the Direct Method starting from the late 19th century, the Structural Method from the 1940's , the Situational Method from the 1950's, the Audiolingual Method from the end of 1950's, and the Communicative Method from the 1970's.

These methods have also been adopted in Teaching Chinese as a Second Language (CHISEL) in the last 20 years. In this paper, I will first discuss these methods briefly. Then, I will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of these methods related to the practice of teaching Chinese as a second language in Taiwan and elsewhere. Thirdly, I will propose a new model in CHISEL, which tries to raise the awareness of the importance of learners' language behavior at different stages in acquiring the target language, and the awareness that second language teaching and learning involve not just the language itself, but also cognition and function. Finally, I will discuss the implications of the new model for CHISEL in the 21st century.

1. Teaching Methods

(1) The Grammar-Translation Method (1840 - 1940)

In the late 18th century, J.V. Meidinger in Germany used the Grammar-Translation Method to provide a practical way of teaching French grammar to large group of students in order to read its literature and to write in French, which was later adopted for teaching English grammar by J.C. Fick. Grammar rules were taught systematically in L1 and were practiced in translation exercises.

The Grammar-Translation Method was criticised for emphasizing the traditional grammar rules in classic literatures only, and for neglecting spoken language.

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(2) The Direct Method (late 19th c. - 1920)

The Direct Method was developed from the Natural Method used by L. Sauveur in the late 1860s. It became well known in the United States because of the Berlitz language schools. Its practioners taugh L2 in this target language exclusively in small classes by real objects, body gestures, facial expression, pictures, vedio tapes, etc. Oral communication skills, and correct pronunciation and grammar were the major focus. Translation was not used in classes.

Although the Direct Method was successful, it was criticised for depending too much on the instructor's L2 language skill, rather than on textbooks. It lacked a systematic methodology. Complex grammar points, and abstract thoughts and phenomena were explained to great lengths, which hindered or even blurred the comprehension of language learners.

(3) The Structural Method (1950s - 1980s)

The Structural Method was devised by C,C. Fries in the 1950s. It focused on modern spoken language and sentence patterns/substitution tables. It helped language learners to acquire L2 'speech habits' through oral practice of sentence patterns, which could be extended by inserting nominal, verbal and/or sentential modifiers.

(4) The Situational Method (1950s -)

A.S. Hornby invented the term 'the Situational Approach' in 1950. Grammar points of L2 spoken language were taught and practiced in everyday situations through pictures, role play, and imagined contexts. That is, the Situational Method emphasized on the real usage of the knowledge of L2 learned in class.

(5) The Audiolingual Method (the end of 1950s -)

N. Brooks coined the term 'audiolingual' in 1964. The Audiolingual Method combined structures of L2 with aural-oral practice of the language, and also L2 language teaching with technology. Spoken language language was primary. Language was learned through a mechanical stimulus-response process. Oral skill was the foundation for other language skills. It was teacher-dominated and indispensable of audio(vedio) equipment. L2 instruction was discouraged.

The drawback of the Audiolingual Method was that many language learners found it boring and failed to help them put the oral skill learned in the lab into real communication with people.

(6) The Communicative Method (the early 1970s -)

D.A. Wilkins (1972) proposed that language teaching should pay attention to the communicative function of language to meet the need of L2 learners. That is, language learning is learning to communicate or to use the language. It was learner- and context-oriented.

The Communicative Method raised questioned like whether non-native speakers are qualified in L2 language teaching, whether it is suitable for lower level language learners, etc.

(7) The Cognitive-linguistic Method

N. Chomsky (1966) said: "Language is not a habit structure." He argued that much of human language behavior is not imitated, but is generated from knowledge of the language. Language was derived from how human process experience through language. That is, the mental properties of people's using and learning language were important. These remarks has led to the birth of another language teaching theory -- the Cognitive-Code learning. It suggested that learning of linguistic knowledge and behavior should be conscious, and that the role of mental processes in language learning should be acknowledged. That is, L2 learners should use their innate ability to induce grammar rules and to produce new grammatical sentences. But it failed to mention any teaching method.

In the following, I would like to proposal a new teaching method -- the Cognitive-linguistic Method -- to incorporate with Chomsky's theory of learning.

In order to fit in the cognitive requirement of the learners, language teaching should have the following characteristics:

(1) the goal of language teaching should be to help L2 learners acquire linguistic knowledge based on their cognitive knowledge, and vice versa;
(2) linguistic knowledge should include the grammatical, phonological, morphological, semantic, pragmatic, social, and cultural aspects of the language;

(3) cognitive knowledge of an adult L2 learners plays a major role in L2 acquisition;
(4) conscious learning, autonomous learning, and interactive learning are essential;
(5) L1 transfer is unique in adult L2 learners' language behavior and is essential in order to understand the mental processes in language learning;
(6) error analysis helps in understanding the nature of the error, as well as in solving the difficulties in the processes of L2 language acquisition;

In other words, this model takes both intralinguistic and extralinguistic factors into consideration in order to provide a more satisfactory teaching method.

2. Implications

Furthermore, this model has the following implications for the future L2 teaching and learning:

(1) teacher-oriented --> learner-oriented

L2 language teaching has been teacher-oriented. In this model, we will emphasize the important role played by learners. We will pay attention to the language acquisition process and the need of L2 learners.

(2) dependent learning --> autonomous learning

In the past, L2 learners depended on teachers and memorized vocabulary, sentence patterns, grammar rules, etc. in order to learn the language. They did not ask questions themselves and felt lack of confidence in answering questions raised by their teachers. They did not know how to learn a foreign language well and were not encouraged to discuss questions related to the acquisition of the language.

This model will encourage students to raise questions, to find different strategies of learning the language, to be aware of the language facts and usage, to learn how to use the language to communicate with others, and to make the best use of learning tools, such as CDs, on-line language classes, corpora.

(3) linguistic knowledge/behavior --> cognitive + linguistic knowledge and behavior

Other models emphasize on the linguistic knowledge or behavior of L2 per

se. Under these models, students are trained mechanically and they often feel very frustrated on failing to use sophisticated language skills to communicate with people like adults.

This model will teach students linguistic knowledge and behavior based on their cognitive system. It will make the students learn how to deal with facts and problems in their real daily lives by using language skills that are similar to those in their native tongues.

(4) unbalanced four skills --> more balanced five skills

It is a long-existed myth in almost all L2 teaching and learning; that is, the unbalanced four language skills: students' reading and listening abilities are better than their writing and speaking abilities. Some teachers of Chinese even do not put effort on teaching students how to write a decent paper in the target language.

In this model, teachers should pay close attention to students' difficulties in acquiring a better knowledge of writing and speaking in Chinese. They should pin point the causes of the difficulties, to find different ways to solve these problems faced by different students, and to help them to strike a balance among these skills. Furthermore, teachers should also be aware of the importance of the balance between the linguistic and cognitive skills among their students, and help them to overcome the problems.

(5) decrease the discrepancy between L2 knowledge and behavior

Other models either think that L2 linguistic knowledge is more important than L2 linguistic behavior, or the other way around. Students trained by the former memorize a lot grammar rules, and read a lot, while students trained by the latter tend to be interested in communicate with people orally, and are not interested in reading and writing the language.

On the contrary, students trained in this model will be able to develop all these L2 linguistic knowledge and behavior equally. The final goal is to make the students reach the level of a literate native speaker of L2.

(6) special teaching method based on:

a. the psychological nature of IL

This model consider the learner's language as the best way to

understand the acquisition process of L2 learners. The following diagram shows that the first thing came to the learner's mind is meaning or proposition. Then they look for some linguistic form to represent the meaning or propostion in their mind.

meaning/proposition --> simple/basic form; multifunction of single item; idiosyncratic rules

The forms often found in learner's language are:

(1) very simple or basic form of L2

It is used when the learner does not know how to express a complicated proposition with corresponsing L2 forms, which makes the learner speak like a child;

(2) multifunction of simple item

It is found when the learner has not acquired of various L2 forms which are semantically similar yet syntactically or culturally different. So it ends up like a foreigner's talk;

(3) idiosyncratic rules of L2 which are very hard for students to learn and to use in spontaneous conversation with native speakers of L2; the learners often feel that there is something 'wrong' in the sentences they just said.

Therefore teaching methods based on the different natures of IL should be developed.

b. the analysis of IL:

Speical teaching methods should be invented not only based on the psychological nature of IL, but also the analysis of IL which should become essential in L2 language teaching and learning. In addition to the brief discussion on IL in the above section, there are other factors that should be considered in IL analysis:

(a) IL form --> meaning/culture/form/function of learners' L1
=/= L2 meaning/culture/form/function

In L2 language acquisition, the role of L1 transfer should not be

down played. L1 transfer often occurs when the learner tries to switch the L1 form into the L2 form based on L1 meaning, culture, form or function. When there is no perfect matching in L1 and L2 forms, IL occurs.

(b) mismatching of cognate words --> meaning/form of L1 words
=/= meaning/form of L2 words
The same thing happens when there are words that share the same form, and different forms share the same meaning in L1 and L2, and the learner fails to find its exact cognate counterpart.

Therefore, a systematic contrastive-error analysis related to the meaning, culture, form and function of L1 and L2 plays a crucial role in order to understand more about the nature of IL, the learning process of the learners, and the necessity of learner-oriented teaching methods.

3. Conclusion

In this paper, I have introduced and have evaluated the teaching methods that have been adopted in Teaching Chinese as a Second Language in the last 20 years. I have proposed a new model, that is the Cognitive-Linguistic Method, in CHISEL to corporate with Chomsky's theory of language learning. I have listed the basic characteristics of this model, and also its implications for future L2 teaching and learning. I conclude that this model is better than the models that have been used in the last 20 years in enhancing the quality of CHISEL in the 21st century.

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